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## RESEARCH ON THE PROTECTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HAINAN LI BROCADE

Hainan Li brocade, as an important part of traditional craftsmanship of China's ethnic minorities, possesses profound historical and cultural heritage as well as unique artistic value. With the rapid development of society, Li brocade is facing multiple predicaments such as broken generations in inheritance, loss of skills, and shrinking market. Therefore, conducting systematic research on the protection and inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage of Hainan Li Brocade holds significant practical significance and cultural value.

**Keywords:** Hainan Li Brocade; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Protection Status Quo; Inheritance and Innovation.

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## ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ЗАЩИТЫ НЕМАТЕРИАЛЬНОГО КУЛЬТУРНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ: ПАРЧА ХАЙНАНЬ ЛИ

Парча Хайнань Ли, являясь важной частью традиционных ремёсел этнических меньшинств Китая, обладает глубоким историческим и культурным наследием, а также уникальной художественной ценностью. С быстрым развитием общества искусство парчи Хайнань Ли сталкивается с многочисленными трудностями, такими как разрыв связей между поколениями, утрата секретов создания и сокращение рынка. Поэтому проведение систематических исследований по вопросам охраны нематериального культурного наследия парчи Хайнань Ли имеет большое практическое и культурное значение.

**Ключевые слова:** парча Хайнань Ли; нематериальное культурное наследие; статус-кво в области защиты; наследие и инновации.

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**H**ainan Li brocade, as one of the traditional skills passed down from generation to generation by the Li people in China, not only features a unique artistic style and craftsmanship, but also contains profound ethnic cultural connotations. It is an important representative of intangible cultural heritage in the Hainan region. Li brocade is renowned for its exquisite patterns, rich colors and complex weaving techniques, and is hailed as “a living fossil of Chinese textile art”. According to relevant research, Li brocade has a broad mass base in the ethnic minority areas of Hainan. Its production techniques still retain a relatively complete traditional process to this day, reflecting the unique understanding of the Li people towards nature, life and beliefs.

#### 1. THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF LI BROCADE

Li brocade is a traditional textile technique created and passed down by the Li people in Hainan over a long period of production and life. Its history can be traced back to ancient times and it is an important part of Li culture. Li brocade not only possesses extremely high artistic and practical value, but also carries rich ethnic cultural information. It is one of the most representative items in Hainan’s intangible cultural heritage.

According to relevant research findings, the weaving techniques of Li brocade can be traced back to as early as the Han Dynasty or even earlier periods. During that time, the ancestors of the Li ethnic group had already mastered the fundamental spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embroidery techniques, and gradually developed a unique set of weaving craftsmanship.

The production process of Li brocade mainly encompasses steps such as cotton harvesting, spinning, dyeing, and weaving. Each of these processes embodies the wisdom and accumulated experience of the Li people. The patterns on Li brocade often draw inspiration

from natural flora and fauna, geometric shapes, and scenes from daily life. These patterns not only reflect the Li people's profound reverence and love for nature but also mirror their aesthetic values and religious beliefs.

In terms of color coordination, Li brocade is fastidious. Typically, colors such as red, blue, black, white, and yellow are used as the primary hues. The colors are vivid and rich in gradation, creating a striking visual impact.

Within the social context of the Li ethnic group, Li brocade not only serves as a crucial material for daily apparel but also assumes significant ceremonial functions. It is frequently employed in various occasions such as weddings, festivals, and sacrificial rituals, symbolizing auspiciousness, happiness, and the pursuit of all things good.

Over the course of history, the weaving techniques of Li brocade have witnessed continuous evolution and innovation. Particularly in modern and contemporary times, as the state has intensified its efforts in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, the inheritance and development of Li brocade have drawn unprecedented attention.

In recent years, the local government of Hainan, along with various sectors of society, has pro-actively implemented measures to safeguard and inherit the craftsmanship of Li brocade. These initiatives include the establishment of Li brocade inheritance and learning institutions, the organization of Li brocade skill training programs, and the hosting of Li brocade cultural festivals. Through these endeavors, the social awareness and influence of Li brocade have been effectively enhanced.

## 2. THE CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS AND ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LI BROCADE

In terms of cultural connotations, the patterns of Li brocade predominantly take natural elements and life scenes as their themes, mirroring the ancient Li people's reverence for nature and their profound affection for life.

For example, patterns frequently seen in Li brocade, such as the "human-shaped pattern", "bird pattern", and "frog pattern", are closely intertwined with the Li ethnic group's totem beliefs. Based on relevant research, the "human-shaped pattern" in Li brocade can be traced back to the Neolithic period. It represents a symbolic expression of life and reproduction by the Li ancestors (Wang Yiying, 2024).

The "dragon quilt" pattern in Li brocade is an especially significant symbol within Li culture. It is regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness and power. As per the research of Hainan Normal University, in ancient times, the Li "dragon quilt" was mainly utilized in sacrificial and wedding ceremonies, imbued with a strong religious flavor and ritual functions (Wang Wenjing, 2024).

The artistic characteristics of Li brocade are primarily manifested in its distinctive weaving techniques and diverse color combinations.

The weaving process of Li brocade encompasses multiple stages, such as spinning, dyeing, and weaving. Among these, the "Kung dyeing" technique stands out as particularly notable. This technique involves selectively applying dyes to specific areas of the fabric, thereby creating patterns with distinct contrasts. Such an approach showcases the remarkable craftsmanship of Li artisans.

Based on research conducted by Qingdao University, the "Kung dyeing" technique employed in Li brocade not only generates a powerful visual impact but also significantly enhances the fabric's durability and aesthetic quality (Song Jing, 2024).

The use of colors in Li brocade is also highly characteristic. Frequently utilized colors include red, blue, black, and white. These colors are sourced from natural plant dyes and are imbued with specific cultural implications. For example, red symbolizes enthusiasm and vitality; blue represents wisdom and tranquility; black and white serve to distinguish the primary and secondary elements within the patterns (Li Fengmiao, 2024).

Regarding the pattern design of Li brocade, the composition of its motifs adheres to the principles of symmetry and balance, placing significant emphasis on the overall harmonious aesthetic. The commonly seen pattern types include geometric patterns, patterns of animals and plants, and human - figure patterns. Each of these patterns is imbued with its own distinct cultural connotations.

For example, the “sun motif” symbolizes illumination and hope; the “fish motif” represents prosperity and bountiful harvests; and the “frog motif” embodies the Li people’s wishes for fertility and procreation. Based on relevant research, the “sun motif” within Li brocade appears with the highest frequency in traditional Li ethnic clothing, accounting for more than 35 % of all patterns (Luo Xuan et al., 2023).

Moreover, the pattern design of Li brocade is significantly influenced by the social structure and lifestyle of the Li ethnic group. For instance, patterns on women’s clothing predominantly feature floral and avian elements, while those on men’s clothing lean more towards animal – themed and geometric patterns. This effectively reflects the disparities in gender roles (Shen Jiale et al., 2025).

The manufacturing process of Li brocade is a testament to the collective wisdom and labor achievements of the Li ethnic group. Its technological process is intricate and elaborate. From the selection of raw materials to the completion of the final product, every stage necessitates rigorous screening and processing.

For example, during the dyeing phase, Li women typically employ natural plant dyes such as *Caesalpinia sappan*, *Indigofera tinctoria*, and *Gardenia jasminoides* Ellis. These natural dyes not only meet environmental protection requirements but also yield vivid and enduring colors.

Based on research, the dyeing techniques of Li brocade can be categorized into three types: single-color dyeing, multi-color dyeing, and gradient dyeing. Among these, the multi-color dyeing technique is especially complex. It often requires multiple rounds of repeated dyeing to attain the ideal color outcome (Chen Kexin, 2024).

The weaving process of Li brocade also calls for exceptional skills and patience. Generally, it is personally overseen by seasoned and experienced artisans to guarantee that each piece holds unique artistic significance. Viewed from an aesthetic standpoint, Li brocade not only holds practical value but also boasts extremely high artistic appreciation worth. The pattern design of Li brocade is characterized by rich layering and a strong sense of rhythm. The color combinations are harmonious and unified, presenting an overall simple yet elegant style.

The aesthetic philosophy of Li brocade is profoundly influenced by the traditional culture of the Li ethnic group, underscoring the integration of natural harmony and humanistic concern. For example, the “human-shaped pattern” in Li brocade is not merely a decorative motif. Instead, it represents a direct manifestation of the human form by the ancient Li people, thereby embodying their respect for life and pursuit of aesthetics (Zhang Jun, 2025).

The manufacturing process of Li brocade is, in itself, a form of artistic creation. Each female weaver interprets the core essence of Li culture in her own unique way. Hainan Li brocade, as an important intangible cultural heritage, is rich in cultural connotations and

has distinct artistic features. It has a profound historical accumulation and unique aesthetic value. It is not only the crystallization of the wisdom of the Li people but also an important part of the diverse culture of the Chinese nation. Through indepth research on the cultural connotations and artistic features of Li brocade, we can not only better understand and protect this precious cultural heritage but also provide important inspiration and materials for contemporary cultural innovation.

### 3. PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF LI BROCADE IN HAI-NAN

At present, as a national - level intangible cultural heritage, Hainan Li brocade has achieved certain accomplishments in the aspects of protection and inheritance. However, it still confronts numerous problems and challenges.

The issue of a severely aging inheritor cohort is particularly prominent, accompanied by a notable shortage of successors. Based on the research of Wang Qiujiào (2024) regarding the inheritance model of Hainan's intangible-cultural-heritage Li brocade craftsmanship, most of the inheritors currently active in the frontline of Li brocade production are middleaged and elderly individuals. The age structure reveals a clear discontinuity trend.

A significant number of senior inheritors are gradually withdrawing from the production frontline due to health concerns. Meanwhile, the younger generation shows limited enthusiasm for traditional craftsmanship. This is mainly attributed to the absence of systematic training and insufficient economic incentives, thus causing disruptions in the inheritance chain.

Furthermore, some inheritors have not received official recognition or been incorporated into the local protection framework. As a result, their craftsmanship has not been adequately acknowledged and supported, which has further exacerbated the challenges in the inheritance process.

The inheritance of Li brocade craftsmanship predominantly relies on oral instruction and hands-on learning, lacking a comprehensive and systematic teaching framework as well as standardized teaching materials. As Li Fengmiao (2024) expounded in her research, the dissemination of Li brocade craftsmanship typically hinges on the transmission of experience within family units or between masters and apprentices.

This approach, while effectively maintaining the authenticity of the craftsmanship, nonetheless circumscribes the scope of its dissemination and the efficiency of learning. In the absence of a unified teaching syllabus and curriculum design, there exist substantial disparities in craftsmanship among different regions and various inheritors. This situation poses a significant obstacle to the establishment of standardized technical criteria.

Moreover, this informal mode of inheritance has also resulted in a delay in the systematic collation and digital documentation of the craftsmanship, thereby impeding the holistic conservation and promotion of Li brocade culture.

Thirdly, the conflict between market mechanisms and cultural conservation has become increasingly conspicuous.

On one hand, with the burgeoning development of the cultural tourism industry, Li brocade products have gradually made their way into the market and emerged as popular elements in tourist souvenirs and cultural and creative products. Nevertheless, the market's demand for Li brocade pre-dominantly centers on exterior design and commercial packaging, overlooking the profound cultural connotations and technical values underlying these products. For example, to cut costs, some merchants resort to machine-made fabrics or imitations

instead of traditional hand - woven Li brocade. This practice not only leads to a deterioration in product quality but also gives rise to the phenomenon of “fake intangible cultural heritage”.

On the other hand, due to the absence of effective brand construction and market guidance, numerous Li brocade products struggle to establish stable sales channels. As a result, the income of inheritors remains limited, further dampening their enthusiasm for engaging in the inheritance of this traditional craftsmanship.

In the course of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of Hainan Li brocade, a multitude of issues have emerged, encompassing the fragmentation of the inheritor succession, the monotony of inheritance models, the clash between market imperatives and cultural preservation, inadequate policy backing, limited digital advancement, and feeble international outreach.

These challenges are intricately interwoven, imposing constraints on the sustainable development of Li brocade culture. Looking ahead, it is essential to adopt a multi-faceted approach that encompasses institutional safeguards, talent cultivation, technological innovation, and cultural dissemination strategies. By doing so, we can establish a more comprehensive and effective protective framework, thereby ensuring the enduring transmission of this invaluable cultural heritage.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper delves into the current protection status, existing problems and future development directions of Hainan Li brocade as an intangible cultural heritage, with the aim of providing theoretical support and practical paths for the inheritance and innovation of Li brocade techniques. As a traditional handicraft passed down from generation to generation among the Li people in Hainan, Li brocade carries rich ethnic cultural connotations and unique artistic value, and is an important part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. However, against the backdrop of the rapid development of modern society, the inheritance and development of Li brocade are facing many challenges, and systematic research and scientific protection strategies are urgently needed.

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